Justice League x RWBY Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part Two Spoiler-Filled Review

Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 2, also known as *Justice League x RWBY, RWBY x Justice League,* or *JLxRWBY* for short, is the second part of an anime-inspired science fantasy action-adventure film. It brings together Justice League and *RWBY* characters. The first part was released on April 25, 2023. Yssa Badiola and Dustin Matthews directed the film using Megan Fitzmartin's script. Sam Register and Michael Uslan executive produced. Kimberly S. Moreau, Ethan Spaulding, and Jim Krieg were producers, with Laura Yates as supervising producer. As a warning, this review will discuss traumatic situations such as murder, suicide, and near-death.

Lindsay Jones, Kara Eberle, Arryn Zech, and Barbara Dunkleman reprise their voice roles as Ruby Rose, Weiss Schnee, Blake Belladonna, and Yang Xiao Long, in *RWBY*. They are joined by Ozioma Akagha as Vixen, Jeannie Tirado as Green Lantern and Tru Valentino as Cyborg, who appeared in Part 1. New cast additions include Jamie Chung as Black Canary, David Dastmalchian as The Flash, Laura Bailey as Wonder Woman, Troy Baker as Batman, and Travis Willingham as Superman. Maxwell Friedman, Christopher Sabat, and J. Michael Tatem also have voice roles.

Team RWBY and the Justice League team up once again, fighting soulless creatures known as Grimm which want to destroy humanity. Ruby introduces the film and summarizes what happened in part 1. This reminded me of songs used in *Steven Universe: The Movie* to refresh viewers about the main characters. This may have been designed the same way to pull in non-RWBY fans. At first, the Justice League and RWBY's situations parallel each other. The Justice League fights a Grimm invasion on Earth. Team RWBY battles snakes and other monsters bear Vacuo. Yang, after what happened in Volume 9 of *RWBY*, is worried about Ruby taking unnecessary risks. She chastises her for showing off and putting her life on the line. This directly alludes to Volume 9.

The desperation of Team RWBY is clear. Yang rightly notes that Vacuo is their last hope and says they can't have "a repeat of Atlas." Understandably, the latter gives Weiss nightmares and shivers. She is traumatized over her home's destruction and death of thousands when Atlas fell onto Mantle. Evidently, each of her teammates is going through trauma, but they do not experience it the same. This is an important sub-theme in the film.

This focus on Weiss echoes *RWBY: Ice Queendom*, a 12-episode anime spinoff from *RWBY.* It almost exclusively focuses on Weiss, due to her nickname "Ice Queen." In this film, she talks to Klein, a former butler who helped her flee the Schnee mansion earlier in *RWBY.* She says that where you grow up shapes who you are. She asks, while speaking with another superhero, what happens when that place (where you were born) is gone? Who you are when your home is no longer real? She is directly referring to the destruction of Atlas. However, her words could as easily refer to Palestinian, Myanma, Mexican, Ethiopian, Congolese, Sudanese, Syrian, Pakistan, Iraqi, Yemeni, and Haitian people who lost their homes. They are among those affected by major and minor ongoing armed conflicts across the world.

Unlike the first film, the villainous A.I., Kilgore, works for a mysterious main villain. He is a pawn, but thinks that he is in a partnership, which comes to the fore later. Part of their plan involves incapacitating Batman, with a neurotoxin so he can't uncover their strategy, right before he, Vixen, and Cyborg have almost break Kilgore. The latter is onboard with the plan. He wants to destroy the Justice League, no matter what. This involves altering Grimm to make them more deadly.

Team RWBY and the Justice League meet once again, thanks to the Flash, in a video chat. Both teams realize something is off when the time dilation, since their last encounter, is

revealed. Soon enough, they are reunited. Cyborg uses processing power of Schnee family-owned computers to open a portal to Earth. They escape before robotic soldiers murder them. Due to a possible issue with the dimensional portal, their clothing, bodies, and powers change.

As is typical in superhero films and media, and in *RWBY*, the characters have no time to rest, and are thrown right into the action. They fight off a Grimm attack. These monsters can transform based on superhero's weaknesses. Each hero tag teams with others. Green Lantern/Jessica, Cyborg, Weiss, and Blake battle together in Gotham. Yang, Wonder Woman, Black Canary, and Vixen do the same. Meanwhile, Ruby works with Superman, realizing her semblance is like a superpower.

Through all of this, there are some cameos and funny moments. Yang makes fun of the dumb villain names, such as Weather Wizard and Mirror Master. This is not only in character for her, but echoes how she made fun of Superman's name in the first film (she called him Clark instead). Secondly, there's a cameo of Joker and Harley Quinn drinking martinis. Thirdly, there are hints at storyline from the original *RWBY* series, with name-dropping of Salem's unhinged lackey (Tyrian Callows), Salem, and some villains. The latter comes full circle when the primary villain, running the show, is later revealed.

There are similarities between the film and *gen:LOCK*. It is revealed that Kilgore is working with someone experimenting on Grimm and building a machine that transfers consciousness. This is exactly what gen:LOCK is about. Protagonists transfer their consciousness into robots and fight for the "democratic" Polity, and against the "evil" and "autocratic" Union. That series remains problematic, controversial, and plagued by issues. This included series creator Gary Haddock leaving Rooster Teeth following complaints about negative work environment in September 2019, prior to the second season's release from November to December 2021. Although my views on the series are undecided, *gen:LOCK* still has some good points.

The film has some nods to Volume 9. For instance, Superman says they need to rest, noting they won't be in good shape unless they take care of themselves. I saw this remark as alluding to what happened to Ruby in Volume 9. In the film, Ruby is annoyed, literally storming off, and Weiss follows her lead. In contrast, Blake and Yang almost function as a unit, wanting to rest, and are in the right. Not long after, Ruby compensates by doing a lot of training, and tells Superman she is trying to live up to her mom's stories. She even tells him that she wants to get as much as she can before she "falls" and says "heroes fall." The latter happens in Volume 9. Team RWBY fall into the Ever After and eventually find a way to leave, but not without traumatic experiences.

Finally, Yang withholds her worries. She later confronts Ruby, with Blake's moral support, and tells her that she isn't exuding confidence, but a "death wish" instead. Understandably, this surprises Ruby. She wasn't aware that her sister thought of her that way. She hugs her and tells her that she "isn't going anywhere." The latter line undoubtedly hints to her near suicide in Volume 9, resulting in Yang's protectiveness.

The collaboration between the Justice League and Team RWBY is empowering, especially since both groups have only worked together one time before (in part 1). Cyborg is a hacker of sorts and works to ensure their victory. Thanks to their information sharing, they realize that Arthur Watts, an unhinged scientist working for Salem, faked his own death, and is

partnered with Kilgore. At the same time, the film shows growing connections between both teams.

One example of this is the heart-to-heart between Yang and the Flash. While Kilgore haunts him, and he tries to figure out the biopoison killing Batman, Yang tries to reassure him. She tells him about what happened after her arm got cut off by Blake's sadistic ex-boyfriend Adam Taurus and how she felt her whole identity had been taken from her. Following this, she makes a plea to Flash. She tells him to improve his emotional intelligence, explaining that his anger doesn't only affect him, but everyone who loves him. Also, this could be referring to Yang's emotional connection with Blake.

Another example is the Ruby-Superman bond. Both had parents who died young. For Superman it was both of his parents, while for Ruby it was her mother. The connection between Weiss and Batman is emphasized, as it was in the first film. Weiss talks to Batman about Gotham, and he tells her that he wasn't running from Gotham but that didn't like the answers he got when he was a teenager. Then there's a tense scene when she gives Batman the antidote, but it doesn't seem to work. Predictably, the antidote does work, somehow, since none of the superheroes die in this film.

The film's last part involves a huge battle between the heroes, Watts, and Kilgore, inside the holo-trap created by Cyborg. This allows Team RWBY to return to their usual forms. This is no easy battle. Watts manipulates the holo-environment to his advantage. He takes over Wonder Woman, Jessica/Green Lantern, Yang, and the Flash, although not at once. All the while, Cyborg realizes he needs to plug himself into all the Grimm at once, even if it kills him! At the same time, Weiss's trauma flares when they fight in a simulated Atlas. Ruby is there to support her, likely delighting White Rose shippers.

After they goad Watts into arrogant declarations, the battle ends. He claims he was born to remake the world, that none of them can measure up to him, and that he planned to trap Team RWBY in the digital world with Kilgore, but it didn't work. The latter infuriates Kilgore. He realizes he is a pawn and tries to take down Watts. The heroes turn this against both villains. They trap both in a virtual prison, a holo-trap to be exact, while both fight one another rather than the heroes. As a result of this prison, neither can control Grimm anymore and the rest of the world is fine.

The film ends with some of them tired from the fighting and heartfelt moments. This includes a photo together (shown at the beginning of this review), all celebrating their victory. Following this, Yang fist-bumps with Flash, Blake laughs with Black Canary, Wonder Woman, and Vixen. Weiss talks to Batman and Ruby talks to Superman. They have little time to connect after that: the Justice League must fight Lex Luthor and Team RWBY returns to Remnant. The film's final scene features the Justice League standing on a ledge looking out at the city (I believe it's Metropolis).

Overall, the movie was good, and the music was fitting, but I liked Part 1 better than Part 2. This is partially because the movie wrapped up too quickly. This perception is no accident. The film is eight minutes shorter than Part 1. In addition, it was disappointing that there were few Bumbleby (Blake/Yang ship) moments apart from both tag-team fighting, Blake declaring that a fake Yang could never fool her, and Yang and Blake kissing in the background of the aforementioned photo. According to the RWBY wiki, this film takes place after Volume 9 and an expected Volume 10. So, this closeness makes sense.

I also felt that the voice acting in the film, either from the main RWBY voice cast, or from others like Akagha was excellent. I liked the film's messages of empowerment and stating that people can choose their own path. Ruby says exactly this, noting she isn't her mom, that she isn't going to leave, and that they make their own futures.

There were other differences between part 1 and part 2. Kerry Shawcross directed Part 1, but not Part 2. That went to Dustin Matthews and Yssa Badiola. Matthews animated episodes of *gen:LOCK* and *RWBY* (in Volumes 1-5), directed *RWBY* Volume 7, *RWBY Chibi*, and was this film's lead animator. Badiola, on the other hand, was lead animator on *Nomad of Nowhere*, directed four episodes on *RWBY* Volume 9 (and voiced some minor characters), and created *Recorded by Arizal*.

Otherwise, this film features many iconic voice actors, as Zech pointed out. Apart from the recurring cast from the first film, five voice actors are new: Jamie Chung, Christopher Sabat, J. Michael Tatum, Travis Willingham, Troy Baker, and Maxwell Friedman. Chung recently voiced Vax in *My Dad the Bounty Hunter*. Sabat voiced Watts in *RWBY* (and reprises that role here). Tatum voiced Klein Sieben in *RWBY* and *RWBY Chibi.*

Willingham voiced Grog in *The Legend of Vox Machina*, assorted characters in *Kid Cosmic, RWBY*, *Phineas and Ferb,* and *Amphibia*, and King Roland II in *Elena of Avalor* and *Sofia the First.* Baker lent his voice to characters in *Star Trek: Lower Decks, American Dad, Scooby-Doo! Mystery Incorporated,* and many video games. This is the first voice role for Friedman, who is a pro wrestler. Tatum will also voice Quinn in the indie animated pilot, *Far-Fetched*.

This film, a collaboration by Rooster Teeth Animation, DC, and Warner Bros. Animation, features Meghan Fitzmartin as the writer. Fitzmartin was an executive assistant on *Supernatural*, writer for the first film, writer for *Supernatural Academy* and *DC Super Hero Girls* (the first version), and other series. This film's animation is superb. The animators, artists (like art director Erin Winn), sound designers, visual effects staff, and others deserve praise and recognition.

Officially released on October 17th, this film wasn't released in Crunchyroll's online store until October 31. By that time, the film could be purchased on PrimeVideo for $19.99. Later, prices dropped to $4.99 to rent and $14.99 to buy. As of this review, the film has not been added to Max. In early December, both parts were packaged together in *Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes & Huntsmen – The Complete Adventure*. That is available on the same/similar platforms as Part 2. Presently, Blu-ray versions of Part 2 are sold out in the Crunchyroll Store!

Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 2, like Part 1, can be purchased on Prime Video, Vudu, Google Play/YouTube, Microsoft, or have the DVD and Blu-

ray ordered from other online marketplaces. *Justice League x RWBY: Super Heroes and Huntsmen, Part 1* can be viewed on the same platforms or be streamed on Max. While you're at it, you can purchase *RWBY* on Prime Video and Vudu, or stream it on Rooster Teeth (seasons 1-8) and Crunchyroll.

Animation	★★★★★
Voice Acting	★★★★★
Music	★★★★☆
Story	★★★☆☆
	4.3
	★★★★☆